

Surveying Employees

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What questions should I ask employees in the survey?

A: The questions asked in a survey depend on what you want to find out. Here we are concerned with finding out how many, or what percentage of your employees get to work by driving alone as opposed to traveling by other means. To make survey simpler for you and to provide consistent reporting information for your management, please use this sample [Employee Survey](#). There are a variety of survey samples from which you can pick; however, it is important that whatever the survey is that you select for your reporting, it should capture the same information. Some states or municipalities already require employers to administer a survey as part of a mandatory trip reduction ordinance.

In some communities, a transportation agency (such as a regional planning agency or transportation management association) may be able to administer a survey that not only reports on mode share but also helps better understand the commuting needs of your employees. Employers may wish to add questions to the survey about other commuting services or options that employees desire, or benefits that would be useful in encouraging employees to try transit, ridesharing, walking or bicycling, or flexible work arrangements. To find a transportation demand management agency in your community, visit www.commuterchoice.com.

Q: What are the steps for surveying employees?

A: There are seven basic steps to conducting an employee survey:

1. Determine when to conduct the employee survey
2. Establish how the survey will be distributed
3. Decide which employees to survey
4. Determine how many employees to survey
5. Inform employees of the survey and distribute survey to all eligible or sampled employees
6. Collect the employee surveys and contact non-responders
7. Compile the results of the employee survey
8. Share results of the survey with management and possibly employees at your worksite.

Please see below for detailed information about each of these steps.

Q: When should I conduct the survey?

A: Employees should be surveyed about their commuting trips following a *typical workweek*. Surveys should not be distributed to employees the week following a holiday, after a group of employees have not been present at the worksite (e.g., during a corporate retreat), or after other circumstances that could affect employee commuter patterns. There may also be seasonal affects, for example employees might bike or walk more in the summer and drive alone more in the winter, and school vacation schedules may affect the commuting choices of employees with children.

In addition to deciding when to conduct the survey, a deadline should be set for collecting surveys from employees. This deadline should be set to allow sufficient time to contact non-responders and compile and analyze the results after the survey period has ended.

Q: How should the survey be distributed?

A: Surveys should be distributed in the manner that best suits your organization's culture and the type of work your employees do. Distribution options include the following:

- ◆ E-mail – appropriate for employers that regularly communicate in this manner
- ◆ Web – employees log on to a website and fill out the questionnaire online
- ◆ Mass distribution – sent to employees along with their paychecks, through an organization newsletter, or via a special mailing
- ◆ Group administration – distribution at an employee meeting where the employees fill out the survey during the meeting
- ◆ Individual administration – dissemination by an individual assigned to administer the survey to employees (most appropriate for smaller organizations)

E-mail, web and mass distribution require less administration on the front-end, but often require more follow-up to ensure good results. Group or individual administration reduces the problems of non-responders and waiting for employees to submit their surveys, but requires additional administration time.

Q: How do I decide which employees to survey?

A: Employees who should be surveyed fall in any of the following categories:

- ◆ Employees who are on your organization's payroll and assigned to your worksite, including night shift, or teleworking employees OR
- ◆ Employees who have an assigned workstation at your site OR
- ◆ Part-time employees who work half time or more (you are encouraged to include all part-time employees in order to get more accurate and useful information) OR
- ◆ Contractors at your worksite who are not on your organization's payroll but are allowed to take part in your organization's benefits or use your organizations commute facilities or services

Q: How do I determine how many employees to survey and draw a sample?

A: Before proceeding with a sampling approach, you should consider the option of surveying all employees. Sampling is used to represent a larger population when that population is very large or hard to study for other reasons. Conducting a survey means notifying participants, distributing questionnaires, and following up with participants who are slow to respond. With a large population drawing a sample can considerably reduce the work involved in surveying.

But while a smaller population requires a smaller sample, the percentage of the population that needs to be sampled is larger for a small population. For example, if you have a worksite with 5,000 employees and want survey results at the 95 percent confidence level, with a margin of error of ± 3 percent, you would need a sample of 880 people, or about 18 percent of the population. On the other hand, if you have a worksite of 100 employees and want results at the same confidence level and margin of error, you would need a sample of 92 people, which is so close to size of the entire population that you do not save yourself any appreciable effort by sampling.

Sampling is a science in its own right and there are many different ways to go about it. This document offers one suggested approach – simple random sampling. However, there are other approaches, not discussed here, such as stratified sampling that may be useful at your worksite. If your organization employs a statistician, or if you have access to a statistical

consultant you should work with that individual to develop an approach that best suits your worksite.

The number of employees to survey depends on the size of the work force at your worksite.

If your worksite has fewer than 750 eligible employees:

All eligible employees should be surveyed.

If your worksite has 750 or more eligible employees:

You may survey a **random sample** of eligible employees. The goal of a random sample is to create unbiased results that can be generalized to the worksite as a whole without surveying each employee. Use the table below to determine the sample size required for a given number of eligible employees:

Number of Eligible Employees	Required Sample Size
750 to 999	516
1,000 to 1,249	576
1,250 to 1,499	624
1,500 to 1,999	696
2,000 to 2,999	787
3,000 to 3,999	843
4,000 to 4,999	880
5,000 to 9,999	964
10,000 to 19,999	1,013
20,000 or more	1,030

You should pick the sample through **random means of drawing names**.

Examples of survey methods that are **NOT** random samples include:

- Distributing surveys to only employees who are in one business unit or on one floor of a building
- Distributing surveys to 50 employees in each business unit or to 50 employees on each floor of a building
- Handing out surveys to people who happen to be in the cafeteria on a given day or at a staff meeting on a given day

The following methods may be used to create a random sample.

If you have 750 to 1,625 eligible employees:

Step 1: First, create a list of all survey-eligible employees (see “How do I decide who to survey?” question above). The list can be compiled using names organized alphabetically or by social security number. Do not use arrangements such that a recognizable group is divided into standard intervals. For example, do not use an arrangement where supervisors and staff members alternate.

Step 2: Using the table above, determine how many eligible employees need to be surveyed. Calculate the number NOT to be surveyed by subtracting the number to be surveyed from the number of eligible employees.

- Step 3:** Calculate the correct “interval” for removing names. This is done by dividing the number of eligible employees by the number of employees NOT to be surveyed. Round this number up to the nearest whole number, n.
- Step 4:** Choose a starting number between 1 and n at random. For example, the numbers from 1 to n can be written on pieces of paper and put into a hat, and then one of these numbers is selected from the hat.
- Step 5:** Using the number n calculated in step 3, count off each “nth” employee starting at the starting number calculated in step 4, with each of the “nth” employees taken out of the sample. The remaining employees will be surveyed.

For example, with 800 employees, a survey of 635 employees is needed, and so $800 - 635 = 165$ employees who do not need to be surveyed. Dividing 165 employees by 800 employees produces the number 4.8, which rounds up to 5. The starting number selected in step 4 might be 2, so starting from the second employee, remove every 5th employee from the list. Survey the remaining employees.

If you have 1,626 or more eligible employees:

- Step 1:** First, create a list of all survey-eligible employees (see “How do I decide who to survey” question above). The list can be compiled using names organized alphabetically or by social security number. Do not use arrangements such that a recognizable group is divided into standard intervals. For example, do not use an arrangement where supervisors and staff members alternate.
- Step 2:** Using the table above, determine how many eligible employees need to be surveyed.
- Step 3:** Calculate the correct sampling “interval.” This is done by dividing the number of eligible employees by the number of employees who must be surveyed (as indicated in the above table). Round this number down to the nearest whole number, n.
- Step 4:** Choose a starting number between 1 and n at random. For example, the numbers from 1 to n can be written on pieces of paper and put into a hat, and then one of these numbers is selected from the hat.
- Step 5:** Using the number n calculated in step 3, count off each “nth” employee starting at the starting number calculated in step 4, with each of the “nth” employees selected to be surveyed.

For example, if the employer has 2,000 eligible employees, the table says that 885 employees should be surveyed. The result of step 3 produces the number 2.26, which rounds down to 2. The starting number selected in step 4 might be 2. This means that every second employee in the employee list, starting with the second employee, should be selected for surveying.

Because of the rounding down of the sampling interval, this method can produce random samples of more employees than the minimum required. If the employee list is organized by a factor expected to be unrelated to potential commuting patterns, such as an arrangement by social security number, then you can stop selecting employees from the list once you have the desired minimum sample size. On the other hand, if the list is organized by a

factor that might be related to potential commuting patterns (such as by job type), you should continue selecting employees until you reach the end of the list in order to avoid having a biased sample.

Q. What should I consider in informing employees of the survey and distributing it?

- A. Including a cover memo or letter that describes the survey and its purpose is essential. The memo or letter should emphasize why it is important that the survey be completed. For example, you might explain to employees that the information collected will help you better tailor your commuter benefits to employee needs and/or manage your program better.

Special arrangements may have to be made to distribute and collect surveys from employees who work during off-hours, telecommute, or work part time. Also note that while you may consolidate the design and distribution of the survey, you must report your results separately for each registered worksite.

Q: How many surveys do I need to receive back?

- A: You must try to receive a targeted percent of surveys for your results to be valid. The target percent applies to the number of surveys that are distributed, whether or not all employees are surveyed or a sample is used.

For employers with 300 or more eligible employees:

A 70 percent or greater response rate from the survey should be achieved.

Employers in states and localities with trip reduction ordinances have found a 70 percent response rate attainable, and this level is needed to ensure confidence in the results.

For employers with fewer than 300 eligible employees:

The target response rate depends on the number of employees, as shown in the table below:

Number of Eligible Employees	Target Response Rate (%)
99 or fewer	92
100-199	85
200-299	78

The target response rate is higher for smaller employers in order to ensure the same level of statistical confidence among all employer size groups. A high response rate is often easiest for smaller employers since individual follow-ups with employees can be made.

Q: How do I collect employee surveys and contact non-respondents?

- A: Employees should submit their completed surveys to a designated location or person by a specified deadline. One week after the surveys have been distributed (if sent out to individuals), determine how many have been returned. Normally, response drops off dramatically after one week.

All non-responders should be reminded to submit the survey through a general notice to all survey recipients. Another copy of the survey may also be distributed in case the employee has misplaced the original survey.

Tips for achieving a high response rate include:

- ◆ Include a due date on the survey form

- ◆ Let employees know why they are being surveyed and why it is important to the organization
- ◆ Provide incentives for returning the survey, such as small gift items, such as mugs, magnets, or T-shirts, or coupons for discounts on local goods or services
- ◆ Develop a contest where employees who return surveys can win gift certificates, transit passes, restaurant meals, or other prizes

Q: How do I compile the results of the employee survey?

A: Once you have collected the surveys, the next step is to tally the numbers from the employee surveys by category and by worksite. Please take care to include all of the collected responses in your totals.

Q: Whom can I contact for assistance with surveying employees?

A: Your organization may be able to seek assistance from regional rideshare organizations, transportation management organizations, or outside contractors to provide assistance in either customizing or conducting your employee surveys. Visit www.commuterchoice.com to locate a transportation demand management organization in your community. There are a number of on-line survey tools and sample size calculators available on the web.